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MASSACHUSETTS WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FRAUD
INVOLVING IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE: United States Attorney Tom Colantuono, United States Secret Service Resident Agent in Charge Holly Fraumeni, and Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Boston Field Office Kenneth W. Kaiser, today announced that Verna Johnson, 47, of Boston, Massachusetts, was sentenced to five years of probation after pleading guilty in the United States District Court for the District of New Hampshire to one count of fraud in connection with the use of another person's identity.

In March 2004, a grand jury for the District of New Hampshire charged Johnson with fraud and interstate transportation of stolen property. The charges resulted from Johnson's procurement of a line of credit with Home Depot by using a false name, address, date of birth and social security number. In fact, the name used by Johnson was of another Massachusetts resident who was unaware that her identity information had been stolen. Johnson immediately used the line of credit to purchase \$15,000 worth of gift cards. The gift cards were sold for a percentage of their face value, and they were used at Home Depot stores in Massachusetts.

The Court imposed the probationary sentence after considering Johnson's extraordinary progress during the eighteen months she was on bail. During that period, Johnson earned her GED, took on two jobs, and provided care for her mother who was suffering from a debilitating condition. The Court placed Johnson on an extended period of probation so that she would be under the supervision of a probation officer.

U.S. Attorney Tom Colantuono stated, "Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States, and criminals often steal other persons' identities in order to facilitate the commission of a wide range of serious offenses. We will continue to work closely with federal, state and local law enforcement organizations to investigate and prosecute this difficult to detect crime. Through aggressive prosecution of identity theft, we hope to prevent and deter the growth of this fraud."

The case was investigated by the United States Secret Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald Feith.